

17 March 2020

## Coronavirus Guidance for Adults with Congenital Heart Disease

**The Current situation is rapidly changing please refer to the latest government advice via these two web sites.**

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

**Dear Patients,**

We know this is a worrying time for everyone and therefore felt we should try and provide some guidance and support for you, our patients.

Much of the guidance The UK Government, NHS England and many other agencies have issued on the precautions to take to reduce the risk of catching and spreading Coronavirus for the general population applies to you equally.

Effective handwashing is the most important thing you can do to protect yourself. Wash them especially when you have been in public areas. Wash your hands for twenty seconds, if you cannot get to a sink use alcohol gel.

Cough into tissues and dispose of them into a bin straightaway. Avoid touching your mouth, nose and eyes when you have not been able to wash your hands.

Practice social distancing, avoid unnecessary social contact and work from home if you are able to.

### **Our guidance for adults with congenital heart disease (ACHD)**

Some of you will more susceptible and at risk than others with congenital heart disease due to having other problems associated with your CHD.

If you fall within the following groups it is likely that you are at higher risk of complications from the infection and we would be more concerned about you;

- **Single ventricle and Fontan circulation**
- **Cyanosis (low oxygen saturation)**
- **Conditions associated with pulmonary hypertension and Eisenmenger syndrome**
- **Severe impairment of pump function (heart failure)**
- **Lung compromise due to scoliosis and or having had multiple heart operations**
- **Asthma**
- **Immune compromise due to 22q11 (DiGeorge Syndrome), splenectomy, or immunosuppressant medications**

If you have any of these conditions we would suggest, where possible, you request to work from home. You can ask your specialist to write a supporting letter which may help. If you work in an essential role talk to your employer about your risk of continuing to work.

If not working, reduce social contact especially in large gatherings within small spaces (pubs, clubs etc) but even in small gatherings (5 or more) keep distance and remember the importance of hand washing.

Also try to avoid public transport especially at busy commuter times and think carefully about the need for air travel. Your specialist can write a letter of support for insurance purposes if you have already booked a holiday but prefer to cancel.

### **Rumours about medications including ACE inhibitors e.g. Ramipril and Angiotensin receptor blockers e.g. Losartan.**

A recent newspaper article inferred that if someone contracted Coronavirus the outcome was worse for those taking the above medications. The numbers were far too small for this conclusion to be made and the British Cardiac society and British Society for Hypertension have made announcements that patients taking these medications should continue to do so.

### **I think I have caught Coronavirus - what do I do?**

If you have possible symptoms – dry cough and or temperature greater than 37.8 or you feel hot to touch.

- Self-isolate and call a family member or friend.

Follow the guidance as laid out on the NHS page- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Only contact 111 if you are unable to cope with your symptoms at home, trust your instincts about how you feel, but if you feel worse over the next few days call 111 and tell them you have a congenital heart condition. The 111 service are the best people to advise how you can get help.

- Do not self-present to your local ACHD centre as hospitals have a plan for where patients are admitted

Our NHS is extremely skilled in looking after sick patients so for any medical professionals you interact with make sure you have a copy of your last clinic report to show to them. It will give details of your diagnosis and contact information for your specialist team.

For anyone who becomes more unwell after the above symptoms begin and who may need hospital care for Coronavirus, it is likely you will be admitted to your local hospital, but the team there can and should seek guidance from your Specialist ACHD Centre and you should keep in touch with the specialist ACHD nursing team.

In many instances Coronavirus is like flu or a severe cold and most people will recover.

You can find out the details of the nurse team at your Specialist ACHD Centre either on the website of your Specialist ACHD Centre, the website of the Somerville Foundation (SF) <https://thesf.org.uk/our-community/specialist-centres/> or by telephoning the SF Helpline.

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